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Atari Online News, Etc.  
A-ONE Online Magazine  
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"  
"\*\*\*\*\*"

Well, Memorial Day weekend has come and gone, but not forgotten! We had my mother-in-law up for the long weekend (and more). The weather was great all weekend, and we all took advantage of it! Plenty of time spent tending the barbecue cooking up the usual summertime barbecue fare. I probably added a couple of pounds to the waistline this past week!

As customary over this long weekend, we got plenty of work done out in the yard. The pool is open, and ready to go. Now we'll just have to wait for the water to get about 20 degrees warmer before we'll dare to take a dip! The vegetable gardens are tilled, and fertilized. We have our vegetable plants, and they'll likely get planted this weekend. I've been putting mulch down all week, but there's still plenty to be spread. The flower gardens still need some edging and cleaning up before we can put in the first "batch" of flowers that we picked up during the week. The lawn needs some work, and that will come eventually. And there are always some odds and ends that need to be taken care of around the yard - something that I'll be getting to over the next couple of weeks. Suffice to say, there's always work to do around the yard!

All in all, things are getting into shape, though. As long as the weather holds, I'll be able to get work done - or at least as long as my body holds up!

So, let me rest up a bit - busy day today, between work at the golf course and then doing some work on the yard afterward.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's been a beautiful week here in the northeast, as Dana has probably already said, and I even managed to do a little much-needed yard work.

On another front, NASA's PHOENIX Mars lander has touched down successfully. This is the first time since 1976 that a lander has successfully touched down on the planet Mars using a powered descent. The rovers Spirit and Opportunity, you may recall, landed on Mars using a system of 'air bags' to cushion their freefall.

I remember when the Mars Polar Lander was being prepared for launch. NASA allowed people to submit names of friends and family to be included on a CD that was to be stowed aboard the MPL. 11 or 12 of my 17 nieces and nephews (all that were born at the time) have their names on that CD, which may well rest silently amid the rubble of the MPL, somewhere on the dry ice cap of Mars' south pole.

I had printed out the NASA-provided certificates for all of the kids, and placed them lovingly in the cheapest frames my local department store sold... hey, they were kids... they didn't care about the frames, just that their names were out there on the cold, dry alien tundra... don't judge me, okay? [grin]

A couple of those kids, now almost a decade older, still have their certificates, and display them on their bedroom wall or on their dresser. One or two of them even show a predilection for the sciences, which, of course, 'Unka Joe' does his best to nurture.

I can remember the Gemini program, the Apollo program, all of the Space Shuttles, and the various landers to other bodies in the solar system (and beyond), but I must confess that the ones that hold the most interest for me are the ones that touch down on Mars. I guess it's because Mars is the most like our own planet. Sure, it's colder and drier, and it's atmosphere is only 1% of ours, but the facts remain that there IS water, and there IS atmosphere. The length of the Martian day is almost the same as ours (a day on Mars is 24 hours, 39 minutes and 35 seconds long). Its gravity is only a little over one third of ours. Something that weighs one hundred pounds on Earth would weigh 37.6 pounds.

Of course, you already know that the longest, deepest valley in the solar system (Valles Marineris) is on Mars, as is the highest mountain (Olympus Mons). Valles Marineris would reach from one end of the United States to the other, and Olympus Mons is more than three times the height of Mount Everest and as wide as the state of Utah. But did you know that, even though Mars is only about half the diameter of the Earth, it has roughly the same land mass? Yep. The total surface area of Mars is only one third that of the Earth, but Earth is about 2/3 ocean. Mars is (at the moment) zero ocean, so the entire surface is land mass.

That's just some of the information I remember about Mars, all of it useless to me in everyday life. But I'm one of those people who believe that there's really no such thing as useless knowledge. It's just the individual's ability to adapt that knowledge to a current situation.

Speaking of current situations, there seems to have been a surge in the newsgroup this week and, for once, I'm not concerned about having enough posts to make a good column... heck, there may even be enough to save some for next week. We'll see. Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet, shall we?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup.

=====

'Phantommm' mentioned that he's having trouble getting his SCSI hard drive and a couple of cards (NOVA and Vortex) to get along. Here's more of the conversation:

"My hard drive was a Seagate 46/47 meg SCSI, it had no visible jumpers on it. The MSTE Hard Drive utilities Software, saw it as Unit 1 with the Vortex board installed. Now I could format and partition the drive with the system software, however it would not install a working driver. It would not see the drive to install the driver even though it would format and partition the drive.

I used HD Driver version 6.00 which saw the partitions created with the MSTE Hard drive utility software, and installed a bootable driver. This is the only way I could get it working with this drive. I didn't try setting the ID on the controller. But did try setting the drive to Unit 0 with jumpers. When I had it as Unit 0, I could not do anything with the drive at all.

When selecting it to repartition, I would get a message that the drive doesn't exist or nothing to partition. (something like that). So I removed all the jumpers on the drive which sets it to Unit 1. At least with my MSTE setup. It was the only way I could do anything with the drive.

I started to remove the Vortex and see what Unit the drive would be without it, but got it working right before it came to that.

What had happen was, I had somehow messed up the boot sector on the hard drive with the Vortex installed. Normally the internal hard drive would be setup working, before the Vortex is installed.

Looking in the MSTE manual, the internal hard drive is Unit 0, so it's a bit backward. Unless I run into problems, I'll leave it like that."

Jo Even Skarstein adds:

"The HD must always be set to SCSI ID 0 in order to work with the Mega STE SCSI adapter."

Phantommm now asks about using Apex Media on a TT030:

"Does anyone know if Apex Media will run on the TT030? If not, will the picture(s) and .FLC/.FLH video viewers from Titan/Black Scorpion run on the TT030?"

Jo Even tells Phantommm:

"Definitely not. It will only run on a Falcon.

Not quite sure [about viewing the video], as I haven't used these for at least 10 years now. If I remember correctly, they require a Falcon, but I could be wrong."

Guillaume Tello adds this bit of info:

"FLC/FLH should be playable with M\_Player, see on my page."

Francois Le Coat adds:

"There's been a version built with FPU support, instead of the DSP support, as you can see at <<http://aranym.org/scrshot/apex2.png>> so that it could run on TT030 as well. But I guess it was never released.

I personally bought and registered the Falcon030 version of APEX Media, and would have been very pleased if it also run on Hades060!

In any case you can have a look at the following FLI/C viewer  
<<http://www-ftp.lip6.fr/pub/atari/Falcon/Graphics/flictc47.lzh>>  
rather slow but very helpful, I tested myself."

'DeeBee' asks for info about a new acquisition:

"I just scored a neat little 1040STf system today. I ended up with the computer, 2 monitors (one Atari 1224 color and one 124 Monochrome), an SF 354 disk drive, and some software. The computer has the MichTron PC-Speed PC emulator hardware installed. I couldn't find much info on this online. Any idea as to the rarity of this emulator or what it may be worth?

Here's the eBay link if anyone's interested:  
<http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=140236618398>"

G^¶tz Hoffart tells DeeBee:

"I guess that Michtron resold the German PC Speed '»Sack PC Speed'« by Hans-J^¶rg Sack.

<<http://www.atari-computermuseum.de/download.htm>>

[It] has driver disks for PC-Speed and AT-Speed."

Rick Cortese adds a bit of personal nostalgia:

"\*personal\* recollections. While it is an interesting little piece of history the mod was not very popular at the time. I seem to recall that it let you run several pieces of software like Lotus 123 which were expensive ~\$300 at the time and pretty much standards in the industry.

There was at least one PD spreadsheet that I used on my ST and by the time the emulator came out, the prices of clones had dropped to under \$600 so most people went that route. I was probably only one or two the people in the company I worked for at the time who actually bought Quattro for ~\$100 vs. get a cracked copy of 123 for home use.

The thing is you wouldn't want to run Lotus 123 or Word Perfect or any other software on a PC, too slow. Michtron came out with an AT Speed but it suffered from the same price pressure from the clones.

Prices are typically high on vintage stuff because ~some aging white guy remembers the Honda CR250 or running Dungeon Master on his ST.  
Unfortunately no one looks back fondly about running a spread sheet on his ST."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli posts this about his experiences with MiNT:

"I've been using MiNT for a few hours now, and so I think it's time for reporting. I must admit that, having read many posts in which MiNT users praised all the advantages of MiNT vs MagiC!, I always thought all my problems would be solved when switching to MiNT. It took me 4 years before I made up my mind and, so far, I must say I never saw my system crash so many times in so little time. I own a CT60'ed Falcon running at 96 MHz, but the crashes occur at 72 MHz too, doing things so easy that typing under QED. Last night, I counted more than 30 crashes in 1 hour. Some times XaAES decided to hang, some other times it happened when opening QED, or HighWire, Troll, Litchi, Arcview or even a drive. Each time, no way to resume, had to reset.

I deleted every program or accessory that I read was known to make the system unstable - as Bubble Gem, for instance - and the only one that I know still being active is Xcontrol, which I have no other to replace with.

I hate those crashes that happen with no reason, and that disappear just as they came, without letting us find what happened. As I'm there, I've got some questions I'd like an answer to or, even better, a link to explanations - I've been reading so many things in so few time, that I \*must\* have missed something -

- 1- despites the keytable.tbl that i built and put at the same place as MINT.CNF, my PC keyboard behaves like an original ST one.
- 2- TTP's and TOS' don't launch anymore, despites XAAES.CNF containing the following lines :

```
----- START -----  
setenv TOSEXT  TOS,TTP  
setenv TOSRUN  u:\opt\toswin2\tw-call.prg  
launcher = u:\opt\toswin2\tw-call.prg  
run u:\opt\toswin2\toswin2.prg  
----- END -----
```

As a consequence, I can't (un)pack archives, build guides, aso.

- 3- Kobold seems to have problems too, that I will try and define so i can describe them correctly.
- 4- the Home folder seems not to be used.  
What is the "usehome=yes" line for ?  
Wouldn't there be a line like "setenv HOME <path-to-homefolder>" somewhere in the cnf ?

Yes, I know, that's a bit long, but I didn't find answers to those questions - even on <http://xaaes.atariforge.net/index.php> - so far."

Jo Even Skarstein tells Jean-Luc:

"Then something is wrong with your setup. Could you post a complete (unsorted) list of your AUTO- and CPX-folder? And also a copy of your current mint.cnf and xaaes.cnf? MiNT runs very fine on CT60, I know several people that are using MiNT on the CT60-Falcons. Also, both the

main developers of FreeMiNT (Frank Naumann) and XaAES (Odd Skancke) own and use CT60-Falcons.

I use COPS [instead of XControl] on my Milan. Haven't used XControl since around 1996.

Do you have TosWin2 running and with the console window open? Is there any debug output from MiNT or XaAES when this happens?

It's keyboard.tbl, not keytable.tbl, and I see that I've got it wrong in the docs for KeyEdit. You can use KeyEdit to edit the keytable, it's available for download on my web-page (<http://atari.nvg.org/>).

[#2] Looks correct, as long as the paths are correct. It could also be a problem with the settings in your desktop. What desktop do you use?

What kind of problems? Kobold doesn't understand anything but plain FAT16, on any other kind of partitions it falls back to GEMDOS.

[The] "usehome=yes" line tells XaAES to include \$HOME in the search path used by `shel_find()`.

Either in `xaaes.cnf` or `mint.cnf` [is where there would be a line like `"setenv HOME <path-to-homefolder>."`

Jean-Luc replies:

"Here they are. But, guess what ? No crash since then...  
[List of Apps removed by editor]

TosWin2 is running in background and, when those crashes occurred, I couldn't do anything other than pressing the reset button.

Keyboard.tbl seems to work better, now that I renamed it the correct way. [grin]

Well folks, that's it for this week. I'm going to save the rest of the messages to add to next week's, since we've been running at a message deficit lately. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - BioShock Coming to PS3!
    "Pressure" of Metal Gear!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!  
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## Take-Two Bringing 'BioShock' to Sony's PlayStation 3

Video game company Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. said Wednesday its critically acclaimed first-person shooter, "BioShock," is now in development for Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3 and will be released in October with new features and content.

The game is set in an undersea world called Rapture, dreamed up as a would-be Utopia but where genetic engineering has gone terribly wrong.

"BioShock," which is also being made into a movie, was previously only available for Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360 and Windows.

## "Metal Gear" Creator Cool Under Pressure

The pressure on Hideo Kojima could hardly be greater, but the creator of the "Metal Gear Solid" video game series is cool as a cucumber.

Kojima's "Metal Gear Solid 4" makes its debut next month in one of the most highly anticipated game releases of 2008.

Not only will the military stealth-action game wrap up the decade-long adventures of mustachioed protagonist Solid Snake, it is expected to boost sales of Sony's PlayStation 3 console and to help close the gap with Microsoft's Xbox 360.

Kojima's flair for exquisite detail and intricate stories have gained him a reputation as one of the top game developers in the world, on par with "The Sims" creator Will Wright or even Shigeru Miyamoto, creator of Nintendo's Mario.

Published by Japan's Konami, the previous three games in the series have sold a total of more than 17 million copies worldwide.

Kojima talked to Reuters about the positive side of pressure and why he is ready to say goodbye to his signature game series.

Q: There is a lot of expectation that "Metal Gear Solid 4" will help Sony sell more PS3s. Did that create more pressure for you?

A: "Indeed, there is pressure. There is always pressure. But I'm not talking pressure in a negative way. I can use it to push up the bar for what I'm creating. In that sense there's a positive pressure."

Q: Sum up two or three things about the game that make it different from not only past ones in the series but other games out there. What makes it unique?



A: "The MGS series has always been about action, or actually they call it stealth-action. This time the setting is a war zone or a battlefield, which is a unique experience. It's a war zone, so there is shooting as side A fights side B, but there's a lot of freedom so you can take advantage of being in a war zone and find various ways to play."

Q: What did you do with the story? How important was it to the game and does it wrap up the series?

A: "Yes, it wraps up all the stories of the past MGS games. I'm not a genius like George Lucas, I didn't have this story planned out. I always tried to finish the story in each game. But by some miracle in MGS4 I was able to resolve the mysteries left behind in past games and resolve the side stories from past games."

Q: What was your creative inspiration for "Metal Gear Solid," either the series as a whole or MGS4 specifically?

A: "Actually, I can tell you one incident that was not so much inspiration but that influenced the game design. We have a great military adviser and we take lessons and go to training camps. This was a great experience in designing the game. It wasn't just about how to handle guns or weapons, it was more mental or psychological, like how to blend in with the environment, how to disappear into a forest."

Q: You've indicated that this will be your last "Metal Gear Solid" game. Are you looking forward to other projects or will you continue to be involved in the series?

A: "MGS will always be around. I feel a responsibility to continue this series as long as users demand it. But it doesn't mean I'm going to sit in completely. I'll probably take a different role in the next game. Maybe I'll sit in as producer and let the young staff take control of the new series. I really want to go on to new things."

Q: Games are gaining a status on par with Hollywood blockbusters. Are developers getting more recognition for the art they create?

A: "Yes, I totally agree. When entertainment becomes digital, there can be a great collaboration between games and other kinds of entertainment like movies or even novels. All these things might form together to form a coherent medium."

"I can't really predict precisely that this will happen in two or three years or whatever. But the trend is there, things are happening and I believe that convergence will happen sooner or later."

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

The United States launched a new trade row with European Union on Wednesday by complaining to the World Trade Organization over the EU's import tariffs on computer screens and other technology products.

Technology heavyweights such as Hewlett Packard Co. have long accused the EU of violating the spirit and the letter of the WTO's 1997 Information Technology Agreement (ITA), which axed tariffs on a range of high-tech goods to boost trade.

"The EU should be working with the United States to promote new technologies, not finding protectionist gimmicks to apply new duties to these products," said Trade Representative Susan Schwab.

"Therefore, we urge the EU to eliminate permanently the new duties and to cease manipulating tariffs to discourage technological innovation," she said in a statement.

Global exports of products concerned are estimated to be worth more than \$70 billion, Schwab's office said.

The European Commission said it "strongly rejected" the arguments of the United States and accused Washington of refusing to heed its calls for negotiated changes in the products covered by the ITA deal.

"The ITA has a review clause which can be invoked by members at any time. The EU has said it is willing to negotiate with all other ITA members. The U.S. is not willing to do this. Why not?" the Commission said in a statement.

As products such as television set-top boxes, large monitors and multifunction printers have evolved, EU customs officials have decided they are no longer covered by the pact and hit them with tariffs of up to 14 percent.

Most of the products at issue in the case are manufactured in countries such as China and Malaysia but are based on U.S. design and engineering and sold under U.S. brand names.

#### Yahoo CEO Says Company Is Not 'Under Siege'

Yahoo Inc. CEO Jerry Yang rejected the image of his company as "under siege" Wednesday, telling conference goers that executives are rallying to streamline Yahoo's offerings and make it more relevant to consumers and to advertisers.

Yahoo faces the threat of mutiny from shareholders unhappy with the way its board handled a takeover offer from Microsoft Corp. that was ultimately withdrawn this month.

Speaking at The Wall Street Journal's "D: All Things Digital" conference, Yang stood by his handling of the deal and painted a bright future for the Internet pioneer he co-founded.

"The perception of us being a company under siege is just not accurate," said Yang, who deflected repeated questions about what lies ahead for

the company, where he returned as CEO last year.

Yang and Yahoo President Susan Decker said the company was reorganizing around four pillars: home page, search, mail and mobile services.

"The essence of Yahoo is being defined today," Yang said. "We have to be incredibly relevant to the consumer. We want you to start your day at Yahoo."

Later, he pleaded for time to turn around the slumping company.

"I know people want to see results," he said. "But I think we're starting to show Yahoo can be on this path to being a different entity."

Yang faces a looming showdown with activist investor Carl Icahn for control of Yahoo's board. Icahn, hoping to channel shareholder discontent, has nominated a slate of candidates to replace the current board of directors - a process known as a proxy fight - in an effort to arrange the marriage between Microsoft and Yahoo.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software giant withdrew its \$47.5 billion bid earlier this month. Yang has said he and other board members wanted \$37 per share, or about \$52 billion.

News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch said Wednesday night that he was "mystified" Microsoft failed to consummate the acquisition. "I cannot understand the whole thing," he told the same audience.

Microsoft is "not used to big deals," said Murdoch. "They backed off."

Microsoft offered a price that a vast majority of Yahoo shareholders wanted to accept but Yang managed to spike the deal, Murdoch said. If he were in Microsoft's shoes, Murdoch said he would resume his bid, a gambit that might get a boost from Icahn's efforts.

"(Icahn) wants to make a few hundred million dollars for himself," Murdoch said. "From Microsoft's point of view, it's a bit of helpful noise."

Murdoch denied any plans for News Corp., owner of the MySpace social networking site, to bulk up on the Internet with a big acquisition.

"We're staying where we are," he said.

Yang let out a single harsh snort at the first mention of Icahn's name during his appearance but did not comment on his efforts. Instead, Yang defended his handling of the failed Microsoft talks, saying he was committed to building value for long-term shareholders even at the expense of short-term gains.

He blamed Microsoft for deep-sixing the deal and indicated that regulatory and other concerns played a role. He has said the deal fell apart over price disagreements.

"We did not walk away from the proposal - Microsoft did," Yang said. "We were willing to do the deal on the right terms."

Microsoft and Yahoo have acknowledged they have renewed talks about a possible transaction with since Icahn mounted his challenge, although both companies say the discussions so far haven't included another

attempt by Microsoft to buy Yahoo in its entirety.

Yang said he was still waiting for a clearer proposal from Microsoft but was vague about the shape any possible partnership could take.

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer said Tuesday in his own talk at the conference that the two companies were in "ongoing discussions" about developing a partnership, but declined to provide any specifics.

Yahoo also has been exploring a possible partnership that would allow Internet search leader Google Inc. to sell some of the ads that appear alongside the results users see when they run searches on Yahoo's Web site. A two-week trial completed last month indicated Google's technology would help to boost Yahoo's profits and perhaps its stock price.

But any alliance between Yahoo and Google would face antitrust obstacles because the two companies combined control more than 80 percent of the U.S. search market.

If Microsoft were to negotiate a similar partnership with Yahoo, instead of trying to buy its rival outright, it might not face the same antitrust problems because Google would still control more than half the market.

#### FTC Clears Icahn To Purchase Yahoo Shares

Federal antitrust regulators have cleared activist billionaire investor Carl Icahn's purchase of another \$1.5 billion of shares of Internet company Yahoo Inc.

Icahn launched a proxy fight last month to remove Yahoo's board of directors after the Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company rejected Microsoft Corp.'s last takeover bid of \$47.5 billion bid. He has called Yahoo's actions "irrational" and nominated an alternate slate of 10 directors, including himself.

To gain leverage in the fight, Icahn has spent more than \$1 billion to buy 59 million Yahoo shares and options to give him a 4.3 percent stake in the company. He has sought approval from the Federal Trade Commission to acquire up to \$2.5 billion in Yahoo stock, including his current holdings.

The FTC included the deal on a list of transactions released Friday that received an "early termination" of their antitrust reviews. Early termination refers to the completion of a review by the FTC or Justice Department before the end of a 30-day period required under antitrust law.

While Icahn has made it clear he wants Yahoo sold to Microsoft, there are no guarantees the Redmond, Wash.-based software maker is still interested in buying Yahoo.

#### Mozilla Shooting for Record Books With Firefox 3 Release

Mozilla is aiming to create what may be the geekiest world record ever

with its upcoming Firefox 3 browser release.

The company on Wednesday started a campaign asking users to pledge to download the next full release of its browser on the day it is available so the release can set a Guinness World Record for the largest number of software downloads in 24 hours.

Mozilla has not yet unveiled exactly when Firefox 3 will be available, but expects it could be as soon as mid-June. A test release of Firefox 3 is currently available online.

The company is deeming the day of its release "Download Day" and is asking fans to not only pledge to download Firefox 3, but to host parties to encourage friends to download with them, and place "Download Day" buttons on their Web sites as reminders of the big day.

Currently there is no world record for software downloads; Mozilla is trying to create one with Firefox 3 and its Download Day festivities.

According to the campaign's Web site, once Download Day is over, Mozilla plans to provide the Guinness Book of World Records a signed statement of authentication from its judges showing that it followed rules for breaking records; the company also will confirm download numbers. Mozilla also plans to send video footage and photographs of Mozilla users hosting download parties as well as download logs for a sample size of Firefox 3 downloads to prove it has set a world record.

While the fanfare may seem a bit geeky, Firefox - released in November 2004 - has inspired a significant and rather fervent fan base. This is in part because it was the first browser in years to give Microsoft's Internet Explorer viable competition. The browser even has its own fan page (sign-in required) on the Facebook social-networking site, with 79,174 fans signed up and counting.

According to Mozilla, there are more than 175 million users of Firefox, which is available in more than 45 languages and used in more than 230 countries.

More information about how users can participate in Download Day is available on the campaign's Web site.

#### Internet Explorer 8 Beta Due in Third Quarter

I've given a lot of attention to the forthcoming Firefox 3.0 lately, but let's not forget that Microsoft has a new version of its own browser in the works, too. According to Nick MacKechnie, a senior technical account manager at Microsoft New Zealand, we can expect the next beta of Internet Explorer 8 to arrive in the third quarter of this year. And unlike the current test version, which is marked as a "developer preview," this version will be a public beta targeted at all consumers.

Perhaps the most exciting thing about IE8 is that it will ship with maximum standards compatibility enabled by default. Developers have been clamoring for a truly browser-independent Web for a long time. But if you're among the crowd that relies on business applications specially tailored for IE7, this sudden change of focus may not be all it's cracked up to be, since strict standards compliance could break some of

your existing pages. Fortunately, MacKechnie says, Microsoft has provided an easy work-around.

An article in Microsoft's Knowledge Base explains it all. For sites where every page must be rendered exactly how IE7 would do it, you can have your Web server send a special header that will instruct IE8 to fall back to the older rules. If you have just one or two pages that need special treatment, you can add a META tag to their HTML to achieve the same thing.

It's a good idea to start updating your IE7-compliant sites now, before the public beta of IE8 is released, so that you can avoid problems when the new browser starts to go mainstream. Even better than adding new IE-specific tags or headers, though, would be to try to re-code those pages so that they observe proper Web standards. That's going to be the best way to ensure that your pages are viewable across all browsers on the widest variety of platforms, which can save you time and money in the long run.

How much do your company's Web applications rely on custom features found in Internet Explorer? Have you made standards compliance a priority, or are the advantages of coding to the Windows platform simply too great to ignore? Sound off in the PC World Community Forums.

#### Seagate Plans SSD, 2T-byte Hard Drive for Next Year

Seagate will introduce its first SSD (solid-state drive) storage and 2T-byte hard drive next year, company CEO Bill Watkins said.

The company's first SSD product will be targeted at enterprises that need speedy storage and can afford to pay a premium for the expensive drives. Seagate has no plans to release SSD drives for consumers as the high prices could deter them for the next few years, Watkins said in an interview.

The release date and price information for the 2T-byte hard drive were not available. Seagate released 1T-byte hard drives, the Barracuda 7200.11 and Barracuda ES.2, in the middle of 2007.

While there is no competition now between hard drives and SSDs, Seagate is thinking of going to SSDs in the long term to replace hard drives.

"SSDs are not price-competitive yet," Watkins said. The storage market is driven by cost-per-gigabyte and though SSDs provide benefits such as power savings, they won't be in laptops in the next few years, Watkins said. Low-power consumption capabilities and high speeds make SSDs useful for laptops, but the cost-per-gigabyte won't come down at least for the next few years, Watkins said.

"If the cost-per-gigabyte comes down to 10 cents, maybe," Seagate will focus on SSD storage for consumers, Watkins said.

A 128G-byte SSD costs US\$460, or \$3.58 per gigabyte, compared to \$60 for a 160G-byte hard drive, said Krishna Chander, senior analyst at iSuppli.

"It will take three to four years for SSDs to come to parity with hard drives," on price and reliability, Chander said.

Besides price, other issues will keep SSDs from the consumer space, Watkins said.

Users seek fat storage to carry data and hard drives can store terabytes of data, something SSDs can't do, Watkins said. SSDs also have write issues, with cells in the drives deteriorating quickly and reducing storage capacity, a general problem that plagues flash drives.

Even enterprise adoption of SSDs could be slow, Watkins said. "People are still trying to get tape out of the enterprise," Watkins said.

Seagate's SSD would be mainly for data centers that rely on processing data quickly, like indexing servers or search servers, that can temporarily store data until it is ultimately moved to permanent storage on hard drives or tape. Solid-state drives can move data up to 10 times quicker than hard drives, but data has to ultimately be moved to larger and more reliable storage, Watkins said.

The SSD drive could also be useful for data centers looking to save on energy consumption and costs.

Seagate is taking a wait-and-see approach to SSDs, similar to the company's approach to optical storage. Seagate acquired optical-storage company Quinta in 1997 when everyone thought optical storage would replace hard drives, Watkins said. Seagate wasn't sure how far rotating media technology would stretch, but the cost-per-gigabyte fell and hard drives overtook optical drive technology.

Selling hard drives will remain Seagate's focus for now, but it will make sure the SSD component is available to customers, Watkins said. The company is internally researching and developing SSD storage.

The company already offers hybrid drives like the Momentus that combine NAND flash storage with hard drives to reduce power consumption and improve boot times.

Seagate has been making noise in the SSD market for a year now, but it has been mostly vaporware, iSuppli analyst Chander said. Seagate needs to get a leg up over its competition by getting into the game early and packaging SSDs in volume.

"They haven't stretched out. They are losing an opportunity. The reality is no matter what, in the next three to five years SSDs are going to come out," Chander said.

Entering the SSD market early could give Seagate an advantage over its major competitor, Western Digital, which is too deeply lost in the hard drive market to make its presence felt in the SSD market, Chander said.

## Web 2.0 Sites a Thriving Marketplace for Malware

A wiry young man with his head shaved and wearing a tank top points a handgun straight at the camera in a disturbing YouTube video. The man wears what appears to be a wedding ring, and he gazes vacantly away from the viewer.

Though it's an odd image for an advertisement, this video isn't promoting your average company. It's from a not-so-underground Albanian hacker group that's out to make a name for themselves in the thriving world of malware and computer crime. Besides the shot of the gunman, the video showcases images of a computer screen, a table loaded with foreign currency, and plenty of links to the group's Web site.

Malware is big business, and groups like the Albanian hackers are trying to cash in, using the latest Web 2.0 tools: social networking profiles, blogs, and other publicly available media and Web pages. The digital desperados are moving more and more into wide-scale advertising and brand building on public sites and networks to grow their underground trade.

But wait a minute - how can people get away with selling programs for breaking into your PC or stealing your identity? Simple: Selling malware is not directly illegal in the United States (or nearly anywhere else). Only using it is illegal.

As the malware underground grows, "it's moving away from technology towards business," says Zulfikar Ramzan, senior principal researcher with Symantec Security Response. While virus vendors are still quick to jump on the latest security vulnerability or technical trick, "the real innovations are more business and marketing," he explains.

On the face of it, public ads appear to violate the number-one rule of any illegal activity: Don't make yourself known. And it's true, says Ramzan, that "the more sophisticated guys are more quiet." But since the writers and sellers of Trojan horses and other malicious apps have no real fear of legal repercussions, they have no compelling reason to be shy.

Don Jackson, a senior researcher with managed security services provider SecureWorks, says the Albanian advertisers are a team of hackers who break into computers and networks. "They want to be used for criminal purposes," he says. So they advertise.

Another video ad, this one from a Turkish group, hypes a program used to break into PCs. The group's name and logo (a stylized alien face with the Turkish crescent-and-star emblem on its forehead) play front-and-center in the program's graphical interface, and the video's speaker walks the viewer through a 5-minute-plus tutorial on using the program. More than 17,000 people have watched it.

YouTube is a popular venue for ads from malware makers, with videos for supposedly undetectable Trojan horses, "packers" that compress and obfuscate malware payloads, and even password stealers for breaking into Steam online game accounts. (Asked about the trend, a spokesperson says that YouTube doesn't control site content, but that it will investigate if viewers report videos as inappropriate.)

Advertisements from Internet bad guys don't stop with YouTube. According to Jackson, many online thugs maintain profiles on social networking sites and blogs to keep in touch with their business partners and customers. Many botnet controllers, who sell time on their networks of bot-infected PCs to spammers and other crooks, keep blogs on the livejournal.com site, Jackson says.

The crooks who use these profiles and blogs may not give themselves away with direct references to nefarious malware activities. But the sites provide a more distributed, harder-to-track way of keeping in touch than using one particular underground site. They may also offer a platform



for spouting fascist ideology, as Jackson refers to one Russian underground figure known as 'lovinGOD, or some other pseudo-philosophy that ties one or more of these groups together.

And the pages advertise the bad guy's contact info - an ICQ handle, say, or some other way to get in touch about buying or selling malware.

The profiles offer "the capability of hiding in plain sight," says Tom Bowers, senior security evangelist with antivirus-maker Kaspersky Lab. Thankfully, they're not entirely hidden. Bowers says he works with law enforcement professionals, who try to track the bad guys through social networks. But the crooks are watching the cops, too.

The researchers at the SpywareGuide Greynets Blog recently discovered that malware pushers, pedophiles, and other criminals on MySpace were using a trick to track their trackers. A few lines of Javascript code inserted on a profile meant that if you happened across that page, "you [were] automatically subscribed to that person's video channel." Meaning the profile owner got "a record of every single Myspace user that has visited [his] profile page." (MySpace says it's working on closing this hole.)

All these public ads and profiles can help law enforcement glean useful data for investigations. But since selling malware isn't illegal, they're unlikely to lead directly to prosecutions.

Of course, using malware is clearly illegal. And a Department of Justice spokesperson says it could charge a virus vendor with aiding and abetting, or conspiracy to commit a crime, if it busted someone else who used that purchased malware to infect a PC. But the prosecutors would have to prove the seller intended for the code to be used in criminal dealings, instead of, say, security research, which makes it a fair bit harder. The spokesperson said she couldn't find any instances of actual prosecutions of this type in her initial search of cases.

And that's just in the United States. In many parts of the world, bringing known phishers and malware lawbreakers to justice isn't exactly a priority.

#### YouTube Suit Called Threat to Online Communication

A \$1 billion copyright infringement lawsuit challenging YouTube's ability to keep copyrighted material off its popular video-sharing site threatens how hundreds of millions of people exchange all kinds of information on the Internet, YouTube owner Google Inc. said.

Google's lawyers made the claim in papers filed in U.S. District Court in Manhattan as the company responded to Viacom Inc.'s latest lawsuit alleging that the Internet has led to "an explosion of copyright infringement" by YouTube and others.

The back-and-forth between the companies has intensified since Viacom brought its lawsuit last year, saying it was owed damages for the unauthorized viewing of its programming from MTV, Comedy Central and other networks, including such hits as "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

In papers submitted to a judge late Friday, Google said YouTube "goes

far beyond its legal obligations in assisting content owners to protect their works."

It said that by seeking to make carriers and hosting providers liable for Internet communications, Viacom "threatens the way hundreds of millions of people legitimately exchange information, news, entertainment and political and artistic expression."

Google said YouTube was faithful to the requirements of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, saying the federal law was intended to protect companies like YouTube as long as they responded properly to content owners' claims of infringement.

On that score, Viacom says Google has set a terrible example.

In a rewritten lawsuit filed last month, Viacom said YouTube consistently allows unauthorized copies of popular television programming and movies to be posted on its Web site and viewed tens of thousands of times.

Viacom said it had identified more than 150,000 unauthorized clips of copyrighted programming - including "SpongeBob SquarePants," "South Park" and "MTV Unplugged" episodes and the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" - that had been viewed "an astounding 1.5 billion times."

The company said its count of unauthorized clips represents only a fraction of the content on YouTube that violates its copyrights.

It said Google and YouTube had done "little or nothing" to stop infringement.

"To the contrary, the availability on the YouTube site of a vast library of the copyrighted works of plaintiffs and others is the cornerstone of defendants' business plan," Viacom said.

#### Despite Bill Gates' Comments, Windows 7 Due in 2010

This spring, as the technology industry raised ever-louder complaints about Windows Vista, Bill Gates amped up expectations for the next version of the operating system, referred to simply as Windows 7. Speaking in Miami in April, the Microsoft chairman said, "Sometime in the next year or so we will have a new version," and then went on to extol the virtues of Windows 7, including "the ability to be lower-power, take less memory, be more efficient, and have lots more connections."

Gates talked about Windows 7 as being a much-improved platform for gaming, connecting to mobile devices, interacting with the Internet and synchronizing files between computers. All that led to speculation that businesses could sit out Vista - and wait until the release of Windows 7.

While it's still not clear what Gates meant by his "next year" comment, Windows chief Steven Sinofsky told CNET that the release is scheduled for January 2010, putting the new version on a three-year development track, compared to the six years it took to release Vista.

Asked directly about Gates' comments, Sinofsky refused to bite, simply

reiterating the 2010 time frame: "We've been very clear, and will continue to say, that the next release of Windows, Windows 7, is about three years after the general availability of Windows Vista, and we're committed to that, and we've signed up publicly to do that."

While Microsoft has traditionally talked up Windows versions far before their actual release, the Windows group has been far quieter under Sinofsky's rule than under predecessor Jim Allchin. That's not unrelated to the experience with Windows, he said.

"The reactions that we've had to some of the lessons learned in Windows Vista are really playing into our strategy of getting together a great plan for Windows 7, and working with all the partners in the ecosystem in a very deliberate way, such that the end result is a very positive experience for all of us," he said. That means making sure information is "accurate and reliable" when it is released and that the company has feedback mechanisms.

Sinofsky said Microsoft is trying to manage its communications in a more measured, purposeful way. For example, rather than just talking about "exciting" new features in Internet Explorer 8, "we put together a plan that had some really significant investments, and we started to talk about them when we felt like we could demonstrate that those investments were going to really pay off, and that they were going to be actionable."

That's exactly how Sinofsky plans to talk about Windows 7 - work with partners and "influentials" in a "very deliberate, very one-on-one kind of way, and then we started talking about it broadly." For people who want to know more about Windows 7, "we're really going to focus on making sure that when we talk about the product, that they're getting information that is really what we're doing for the product."

As the new head of Windows, Sinofsky is "archetypal of the new breed" at Microsoft, said Roger Kay, principal analyst with Endpoint Technologies, in an e-mail. This new crop of managers is "more project-oriented," Kay noted. "We'll see how he does on this one."

The interview was a live demonstration of just how deliberate Sinofsky is going to be with details on Windows 7. Aside from explaining that the kernel in Windows 7 will be an extension of the kernel work in Vista and Server 2008, and that Windows 7 will be released in 32-bit and 64-bit versions, Sinofsky parried away all inquiries into "specifics" about the new system.

"So everybody wants to know sooner than later what we're doing," he said when asked about the public-relations impact of being so close-lipped. "And what we're always trying to balance is, well, if we make mistakes, then that has repercussions in the ecosystem that we don't really want to have, and we really want to be a responsible team as part of the overall ecosystem."

#### FCC Mulling Free High-Speed Internet Network Plan

Federal regulators may require the winner of airwaves being auctioned off by the government to provide free wireless high-speed Internet service across a large swath of the country.

The Federal Communications Commission at its June 12 meeting will likely vote on an order setting terms of the spectrum auction that could include the free Internet service provision. A similar proposal was rejected last year.

"We're hoping there will be increased interest (in the proposal) and for the fact that this will provide wireless broadband services to more Americans is certainly something we want to see," said FCC spokesman Rob Kenny.

Kenny said he didn't know when the auction would be held and details must still be worked out. However, he said the resulting network must reach 50 percent of the population four years after the winner gets a license and then 95 percent after 10 years, he said.

Two years ago, a wireless startup, M2Z Networks Inc. based in Menlo Park, Calif., asked the FCC to let it use those underutilized airwaves so it could offer free nationwide broadband service.

In exchange, M2Z - co-founded by John Muleta, former head of the FCC's wireless telecommunications bureau - would pay the federal government 5 percent of sales generated from advertising on the resulting network.

The FCC rejected the proposal because it meant giving the airwaves to the company without it bidding against other carriers for the rights.

#### Mom in Web Bullying Case Turns Grief into Activism

When Tina Meier's 13-year-old daughter committed suicide after being bullied on the Internet, her grief was so encompassing she felt at times she couldn't breathe. She had trouble being around loved ones who reminded her of her child. Even today, recollections of those first holidays after Megan's death are foggy at best.

But in recent months, the Missouri woman has focused on ways to protect other children from bullying, even leaving her job as a real estate agent to dedicate herself to the Megan Meier Foundation.

"Megan is still my daughter, no matter what, and I am going out there and fighting for her still because she is still my daughter," Meier said.

A group of friends and relatives helped Meier create the foundation, which seeks to educate and encourage positive changes to prevent bullying and cyberbullying. Meier and the volunteers are working to improve laws. They speak at schools and to parent groups. They hope to begin offering scholarships to children who help other children in some way.

Megan hanged herself in her closet on Oct. 16, 2006. Her tragic story became public only last fall following an article in a suburban St. Louis newspaper that prompted widespread interest in her case.

Megan had a history of attention deficit disorder and depression. Her suicide came soon after she received mean messages through the MySpace social networking Web site.

Earlier this month, a federal grand jury indicted 49-year-old Lori Drew, a neighbor of Megan and her family. She is accused of one count of

conspiracy and three counts of accessing protected computers without authorization to get information used to inflict emotional distress. The charges were filed in California where MySpace is based. MySpace is a subsidiary of Beverly Hills-based Fox Interactive Media Inc., which is owned by News Corp.

Authorities have said Drew, Drew's teenage daughter and another teen took part in an online hoax, creating a fake boy named Josh Evans who befriended and flirted with Megan online. Drew allegedly wanted to know what Megan was saying about her own daughter online. Shortly before Megan's death, the comments from Josh and some other Internet users turned cruel, with "Josh" allegedly saying the world would be better without Megan.

Drew's attorney, Dean Steward, said she has been advised by her lawyers not to speak about the case. Another lawyer for Drew previously said she did not create the account and was not aware of any mean messages sent to the girl before her death.

Meier, 37, said her grief hits her in waves, and it remains difficult to talk about Megan's death. Meier's life has gone through other changes as well. She and her husband, Ron, divorced. Meier now lives in a town house not far from her old neighborhood with her 12-year-old daughter, Allison.

In an interview with The Associated Press at her home in the St. Louis suburb of Dardenne Prairie, Meier said she does not believe Drew meant to drive Megan to suicide. But, Meier said, she believes Drew "played with fire" and should receive the maximum penalty: 20 years in prison.

Meier hopes the foundation's work will allow something right to come from a wrong. She is also working with <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org> on its efforts to prevent online harassment. And, she's encouraging people to take the Megan Pledge, an effort asking Internet users to stop bullying.

Talking about Megan's experience to middle and high school students is something Meier said she feels she needs to do. She tells them Megan was a real girl, with real dreams, and talks to them about how taunting other children can have consequences.

The presentations can be an emotional drain that leave her feeling she's made of Jell-O, or prompt an extended crying bout. But Meier said she gets a lot out of them, especially the conversations with parents and children after she tells them Megan's story.

Some kids tell her they are having a tough time. Others have admitted bullying classmates, and say they'll try to change their ways.

"I just get my head in a different place. I just go, and I talk to them because my goal is, if there's one child I can change or help in any way, that's what I focus on," Meier said.

Friends and foundation colleagues Christine Buckles and Paul Arthur believe the foundation's work has been helpful to her.

"They say a mother is the strongest woman in the world. That's absolutely true with Tina," Arthur said.

Meier said almost all the communication she receives from the public is

encouraging. But she also receives comments from those who take her to task because her daughter was on antidepressants, who criticize how she raised her child, even those who judge her for divorcing her husband.

Meier is convinced those messages come from people who don't know her and the whole story. "If I sat and listened to that every single day, and read that every single day, I wouldn't move forward," she said.

Meier believes the work of the foundation is making a difference because she hears from people who tell her so.

"I'm going to try and do the best I can do to, hopefully, know that no other family goes through this," she said.

On the Net:

Megan Meier Foundation: <http://www.meganmeierfoundation.org>

Megan Pledge: <http://www.myyearbook.com/meganpledge>

#### Computer Trained To "Read" Mind Images of Words

A computer has been trained to "read" people's minds by looking at scans of their brains as they thought about specific words, researchers said on Thursday.

They hope their study, published in the journal Science, might lead to better understanding of how and where the brain stores information.

This might lead to better treatments for language disorders and learning disabilities, said Tom Mitchell of the Machine Learning Department at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, who helped lead the study.

"The question we are trying to get at is one people have been thinking about for centuries, which is: How does the brain organize knowledge?" Mitchell said in a telephone interview.

"It is only in the last 10 or 15 years that we have this way that we can study this question."

Mitchell's team used functional magnetic resonance imaging, a type of brain scan that can see real-time brain activity.

They calibrated the computer by having nine student volunteers think of 58 different words, while imaging their brain activity.

"We gave instructions to people where we would tell them, 'We are going to show you words and we would like you, when you see this word, to think about its properties,'" Mitchell said.

They imaged each of the nine people thinking about the 58 different words, to create a kind of "average" image of a word.

"If I show you the brain images for two words, the main thing you notice is that they look pretty much alike. If you look at them for a while you might see subtle differences," Mitchell said.

"We have the program calculate the mean brain activity over all of the words that somebody has looked at. That gives us the average when somebody thinks about a word, and then we subtract that average out from all those images," Mitchell added.

Then the test came.

"After we train on the other 58 words, we can say 'Here are two new words you have not seen, celery and airplane.'" The computer was asked to choose which brain image corresponded with which word.

The computer passed the test, predicting when a brain image was taken when a person thought about the word "celery" and when the assigned word was "airplane."

The next step is to study brain activity for phrases.

"If I say 'rabbit' or 'fast rabbit' or 'cuddly rabbit', those are very different ideas," Mitchell said.

"I want to basically use that as a kind of scaffolding for studying language processing in the brain."

Mitchell was surprised at how similar brain activity was among the nine volunteers, although the work was painstaking. For an MRI to work well, the patient must sit or lie very still for several minutes.

"It can be hard to focus," Mitchell said. "Somewhere in the middle of that their stomach growls. And all of sudden they think, 'I'm hungry -- oops.' It's not a controllable experiment."

### 'Sniff' Out Acquaintances, Wherever They Are

One of texting's most common messages - "Where r u?" - may become a quaint phrase of the past with a new program that lets your friends and associates find out for themselves.

The program Sniff, which stands for "social network integrated friend finder," will track down anyone who has signed up and agreed to be "Sniffed."

Generally for less than \$1, Sniff produces a rough address and map for any participant using the same technology rescuers employ to find wayward hikers who call 911 by cell phone - triangulating the caller's location based on which cell phone towers are nearby.

If you're lost, you can Sniff yourself.

About 180,000 users in Scandinavia are doing it, and the program recently launched in the United Kingdom, where Sniff searches go for 50 pence.

Denver-based Useful Networks, owned by Liberty Media Corp., says the program is handy for finding friends on the way to happy hour, and it expects at least two major U.S. wireless carriers - CEO Brian Levin wouldn't say which - to start offering Sniff within weeks through Facebook and <http://www.sniffu.com>.

The startup Loopt offers a similar service that automatically updates users' friends' locations. And Google Inc.'s Dodgeball will tell all your friends where you are when you sends Dodgeball a message updating your location.

Paula Hammond, executive director of the domestic violence program Project Safeguard in Colorado, worries that Sniff can't verify whether the person who registers a cell phone to participate actually owns the phone. That loophole could enable a stalker, for instance, to track a victim without her knowing, Hammond says.

Sniff says its periodic reminders to users should tip off people who have been registered without their knowledge, and users can make themselves "invisible" to certain Sniffers.

The company's also working on giving faux locations to stalkers - and to bosses looking for employees playing hooky - Levin says.

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